

MUNI
ARTS

Czech New Wave

CZS36

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Black Peter

Czechoslovakia 1963

(Černý Petr)

dir. Miloš Forman

1. What do you make of the film's title?
2. How would you describe the main protagonists – Petr, Pavla, Čenda, father and mother? What does the film tell us about generational gap?
3. Why do you think this film was praised by state and party authorities as a great example of socialist cinema?

the hilarious debut feature from
Academy Award®-winning director
Milos Forman
(ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST, AMADEUS)



Black PETER

"A timeless comedy!"
– NEWSWEEK

"Very funny!"
– NY TIMES

Petr x Čenda

Two portraits of period young masculinity



- Petr not a rebel, just a regular guy (clumsy, quiet, yet doesn't bend to the ideas of the older generation)
- Čenda –efficient and dedicated labourer, the film pokes a fun at him?
 - dynamic, loud, not smart

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“A great example of
socialist film art“
WHY?

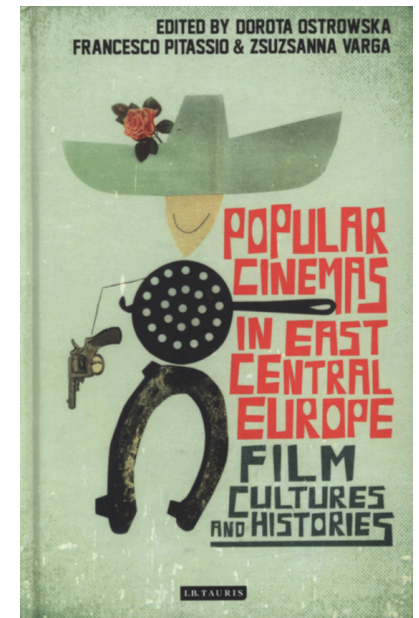
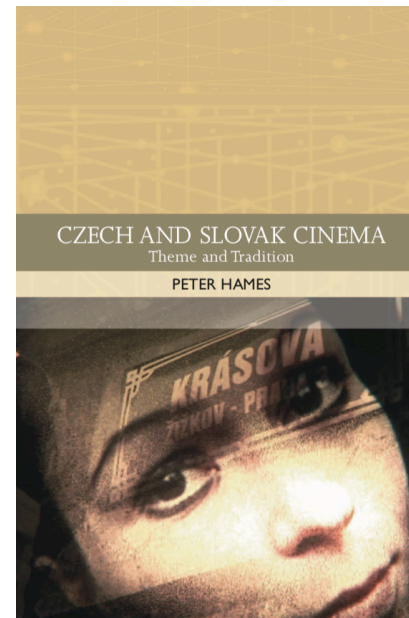
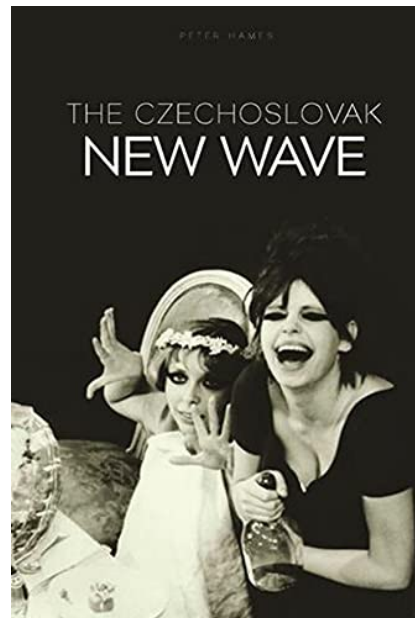
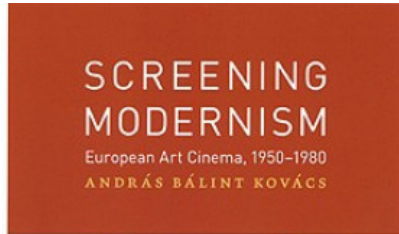
- Comedy
- Observation: almost no experiments with narration, style and/or ideological background X absorbing international influences and abrupt ending
- International success and visibility – various prizes at Venice, Locarno and Lisbon IFF



Czech New Wave Course: Organization

- Study materials will be provided every week – that is reading (chapters and articles not accessible in the MUNI library), presentations and films (files or links)
- Each session will consist of a screening, followed by a discussion and a lecture on a film/topic/artist
- November 1st – lecture on the slovak branch of the new wave will be given Katarína Kunkelová (PhD candidate at FAV MUNI)
- Final Assessment – oral exam – students have to provide a list of 16 films, with short abstract of 250 words, summarizing the story and highlighting any element they feel are worth discussing + summary of two chapters/articles provided by the teacher
 - The dates of the exam TBA

Recommended reading



Databases, (S)VOD platforms and reading:

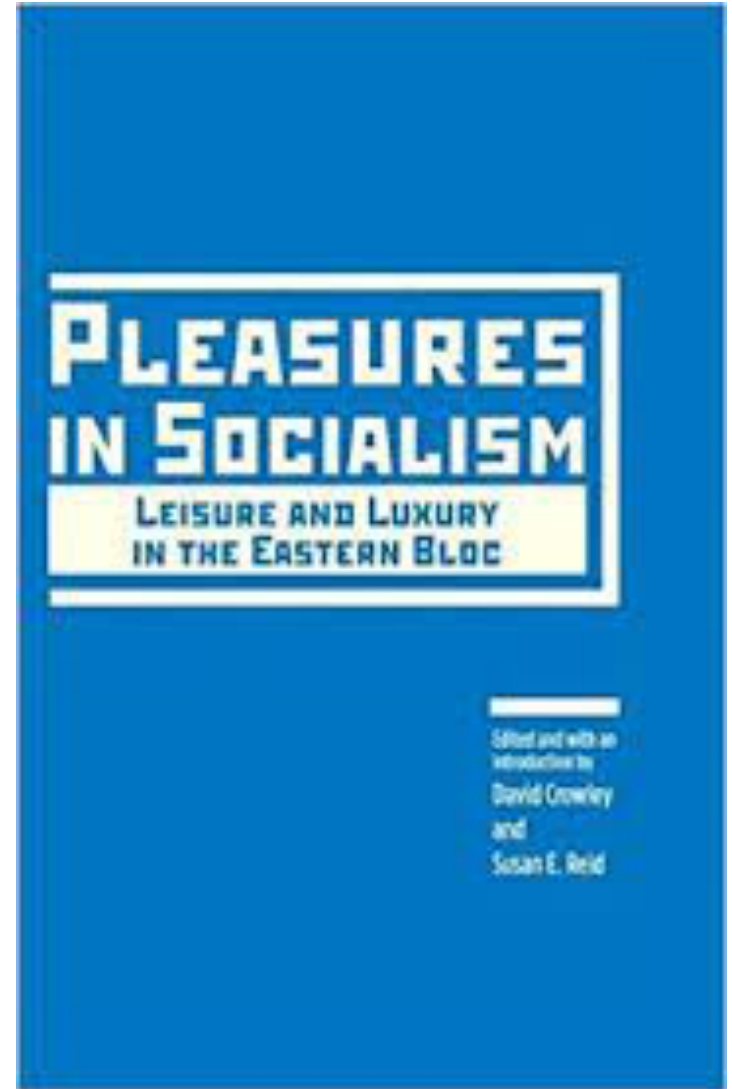
<https://www.filmovyprehled.cz/en>

<https://dafilms.com/>

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=česká+filmová+klasika+nfa

Reading: Week 1

CROWLEY, David and REID, Susan E. (eds.): Introduction: Pleasures in Socialism? In: *Pleasures in Socialism. Leisure and Luxury in Eastern Bloc*. Evanston IL, Northwestern University Press, 2012, pp. 3–51.



Postwar Czechoslovak Cultural and Social History: A Brief Overview

– 1945–1948: Third republic

– BREAKS

- Nationalization of many industries, incl. cultural and media industries
- Cinema fell under the direct supervision of the state 11th August 1945
- Theatres could not be owned by a private entrepreneur since June 8th 1945
- Strong inclination towards communist ideology and Soviet Union

– CONTINUITIES

- Culture and citizens used to a certain degree of discipline and control since the war years (Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia)
- Leftist tendencies already present in the so-called First Republic era (1918–1938), although they were a minority
- Strong preferences for the working class

1948–1953: Forming the system and the first crisis

- 1948, February 17th–25th – the Communist putsch
 - Starting the era of a very tight and rigid ideological control in agreement with a larger society
 - Important formative years of the system
 - Top-down implementation of Soviet politics
 - **Numerous clashes between party leadership and state government**
 - working class is the new domineering social class
 - Radical youth and female employment
- The „Sharp Course“ politics
 - socialist realism is the norm
 - revision of Czech cultural heritage
 - cutting ties with western influences and democratic tradition
- since 1951 stagnation and militarization of society: preparation for global conflict, “fight for peace”
- 1953 – death of Stalin and president Klement Gottwald
- The politics of New Course >> return of entertainment and commercial genres (operetta, satire)

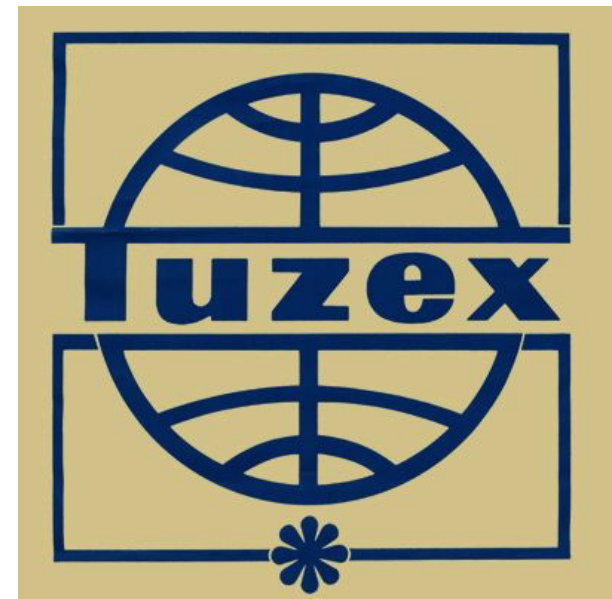
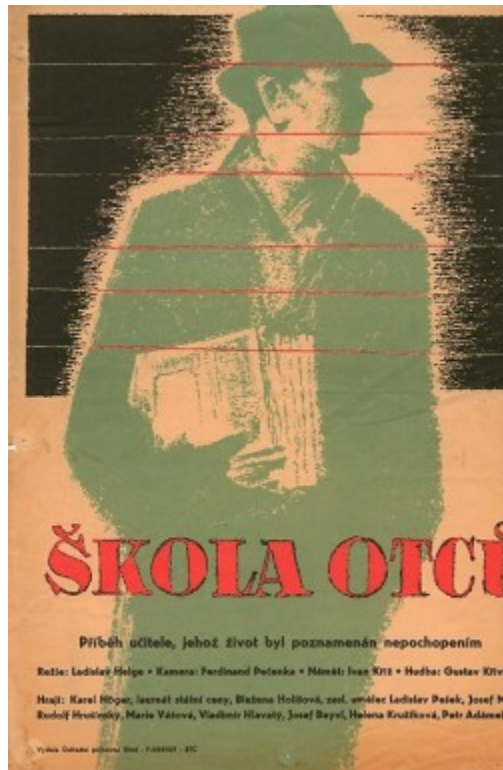


1954–1956: Changing priorities

1957–1960: Schizophrenia of the regime

- the foundation of modern socialist society
- Changing priorities >> securing a more comfortable life standard for Czechoslovak citizens
- socialist realism is not considered as a strict norm
- the country opens towards western influences

- In the second half of the decade a lot of opposing tendencies
 - the effort to finalize the cultural and ideological revolution and getting closer to communist utopia resulted in the tendency to weaken critical voices and renewed preference for ideological purity
 - **X the regime was much weaker than at the beginning of the decade, bottom-up reaction on societal changes and trends**
 - Faith in technological progress / the return to world fashion in 1957 / Czechoslovak success at Expo Brusel 1958
 - the ideal of a regular citizen >> no more a worker, but a middle class, cultured person



1961–1963: Economical problems

1964–1968: Consumer socialism

- In the first half of the decade economical issues + global politics crisis
- new generation of top level politicians (generational shift reflected in cinema as well)
- the country is open to international influences (tourism, international students)
- In the second half of the decade the economic situation stabilized
 - Tolerance for western films, music, fashion, although not general (men with long hair, drug using)



Key elements of cultural politics and socialist lifestyle 1948–1968

1. Democratization of culture

any citizen can participate on socialist culture, either as a consumer or as a producer

Downsides – culture was differentiated from ideological perspectives

- Luxury based on the difficulty of access: cars, electronics, fashion, food items

2. Ateistic propaganda and rationalization of life

Departure from religious traditions

New socialist citizen should be a fully formed person, acting in accordance with his or her rationality >> easier for planning standardization and distribution

3. Against petite bourgeoisie (lower middle class)

Wide, yet flexible category